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Pethick-Lawrence, Frederick William

The Labour Party

London

[ca. 1930?]

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THE

LABOUR PARTY

WHAT IT IS

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BY

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THE LABOUR PARTY.

WHAT IT IS — WHAT IT WANTS — HOW IT MEANS TO GET IT.

By F. W. PETHICK LAWRENCE.

Every little boy or girl
That's born into the world alive
Is either a little Liberal
Or a little Conservative.
—From the chorus in "Iolanthe."

This little rhyme was written more than thirty years ago. In those days there was no Labour Party. When an election came, there were only two candidates, a Liberal and a Conservative, and electors had to choose between them. To-day all that is changed. For nearly every seat there is a Labour candidate. His opponents may call themselves Coalition, or Unionist, or Conservative, or Liberal, but he stands for Labour, and has the Labour Party behind him.

WHO ARE THE LABOUR PARTY?

The Labour Party consists of those who labour. Some work with their hands, some with their brains, many work with both. Thus, in addition to unskilled labourers, it includes farm workers and men who have learnt a trade, such as engineers, miners, builders, printers, as well as shop assistants, clerks, teachers, doctors, and many others. Nearly all the trade unions have joined the Labour Party; the Co-operative Societies have linked up with it; the I.L.P. and the Fabian Society are members of it as societies; and many men and women who believe in its principles have joined it as individuals, and are active in working for it.

It is the people's party. It looks to the people for its support; and it is run in the interests of the whole people. The other parties are supported by rich men, who see to it that their own interests are protected by their parties. Both Liberals and Conservatives at election time make big promises

of what they will do for the people; but when they get in power they do not keep these promises because, if they did, their parties would lose the support of their wealthy friends. The Labour Party alone is free to work for the people as a whole, and to work for their good. It is a plain party of plain men and women, who know what life is for the working people and who want to make that life better.

THE AIMS OF LABOUR.

The Labour Party says that in this rich country there ought not to be poverty. All men and women should have money enough to buy what they need of food and clothing and shelter for themselves and their families; and there ought to be something left over for recreation.

The Labour Party says that there ought not to be unemployment. There is plenty of work that needs doing, and it is disgraceful that men and women who want to work and earn their living should be prevented from doing so.

The Labour Party says that there ought not to be wars. It believes that the men and women of different nations are all members of the human family. When Statesmen have had a quarrel, the common people have been called on to go and kill one another. This must be prevented in future.

The Labour Party believes that every man, woman, and child has a right to the happy healthy enjoyment of life, and to complete freedom so long as that freedom does not cause injury to others.

The Labour Party believes that women have a right to share in the good things of life, and that they ought not to have to work morning, noon, and night. It believes that they ought to be cared for when they are ill, helped over the difficult times when the husband dies, and provided for in old age.

The Labour Party has a special care for the children. It believes that the child of the working man and woman ought to have the same chance in life as the child of the rich folk.

The Labour Party believes that when the poor are free from their poverty and the rich from the temptations of great wealth, all men and women and children will have the opportunity to open up their hearts to the beautiful things that life has to give.

HOW LABOUR WILL WIN ITS AIMS.

These are noble aims. To some they may seem only dreams. There is so much wrong to-day, so much poverty, so many wars, so much tyranny, so much sordid ugliness that many people despair. But the Labour Party is in deadly earnest. It means business. It knows its own mind. What is more, it knows how to set about getting what it wants.

The great curse of the life of the working man and woman is unemployment. They have had to work all their life, and have had to spend their wages week by week as they got them in order to provide for themselves and their children and keep the home together. Then one day the employer says there is no more work to be done. The man is out of work! He looks for other work and does not find it. He gets no wages. But he and his wife and his children must eat, and the landlord must have his rent. There is no money! So the wife begins to pawn the things; but as weeks go on there is less and less to pawn. The family is hungry and threadbare. The man walks the streets. All are miserable and ashamed.

That is where the trade unions have been able to help by providing out-of-work benefit. That has been good so far as it goes, but it is not nearly enough. The great trade unions know this, and that is one reason why they have banded themselves together into the Labour Party, which can act in the House of Commons. This Labour Party has secured from the Government that a further sum of money shall be paid each week to the unemployed. This is just enough to prevent the families from starving; but it does not meet the case. What the Labour Party means to get for the working man and working woman is

A RIGHT TO WORK BILL.

which will enable every man and woman willing to work to have work to do or enough money to keep the family in comfort.

Further, the Labour Party intends to get such a change of national policy as will prevent large numbers of men and women from being out of work in the future. Under the present system, periods of good and bad trade follow one another at intervals. One day every workman is implored to produce more and more. He has to put in overtime every day. A few weeks later he is on short time, or is turned off because there is no more work to be done. The Labour Party knows that this need not happen and is only because industry is run for the profit of the employers and shareholders. If things were made not for a profit, but because people needed them, there would be no reason why there should not, in most trades, be a steady amount of work week by week, and year by year.

Many of the things which are made in this country are not made to be used here, but are sold abroad. With the money we get for these things we are able to buy things that are made abroad, so that this trade between nations is really a kind of barter. We make the things that we can make most easily, and we get in exchange the things that we need. Sugar and bread to eat, tobacco to smoke, tea to drink, raw cotton to make the clothes we wear, timber to build our houses—all

these we must get from abroad if we are to have them in abundance. We pay for these by our coal, our fishing, and by the work of our cotton mills, our iron and steel foundries, our engineering, and much else that we do.

WITHOUT FOREIGN TRADE WE SHOULD STARVE.

We should get no tea, no sugar, no tobacco, no cotton, and we should have very little timber, and not nearly enough bread. When foreign trade falls off, our coal miners get out of work, our fishermen get little money, our cotton mills stand idle, our engineers, our ironfounders, and many other workmen become unemployed.

So long as the war lasted it was natural that foreign trade should be less, but there was no unemployment, because so many men were soldiers and so many men and women made munitions. But the war ended in 1918. If the Government had acted rightly foreign trade might have been in full swing again by now. But they did not do so. By their policy tracts of Europe are in dire poverty, and cannot get to work and trade with us. By their policy, trade with Russia was delayed several years after the war had come to an end. All that time they prevented us from getting timber and corn and flax and butter from Russia, and they kept our engineers out of work when they might have been making ploughs and steam engines which the Russians wanted to buy.

The Labour Party is for making a real peace in Europe, so that trade can take place. It knows that this is the only way to stop unemployment and to get plenty of food and other things we need in Britain at cheap prices.

HOMES FOR HEROES.

During the war the Liberals and Conservatives talked a great deal about having a "land fit for heroes to live in" when the war was over. But now ex-soldiers who want to marry find they cannot get a house at all to live in. During the war what was necessary to beat the Germans was always done. It may have been difficult, but a way to do it was always found. It is not impossible to build houses for all who need them; and the Labour Party says it must and shall be done.

GIVE THE CHILDREN A CHANCE!

Mr. Lloyd George has said that we ought to have an A1, and not a C3 population. But how can we get this unless we give the children a chance? Many of the children of our working people do not have enough to eat, because their parents are too poor. What a disgraceful thing this is in one of the richest countries in the world! But it is no wonder that it is so

when rich men were allowed to make thousands of millions of pounds during the war, and when taxes on food, tea, and sugar have been put on to pay interest on the National Debt. The Labour Party would get rid of the debt by putting a tax on great fortunes, and would take off the taxes on food. This would bring down the prices of tea and sugar and many other things.

Again, our children do not get as good an education as the children of many foreign countries to-day. How, then, can our children hope to get on in the world when they grow up and become British working men and working women? The Labour Party would improve education in many ways. It knows that it is often a great burden on father and mother to keep children at school instead of taking them away and sending them out to work. It would meet this by giving money to provide food and clothing for the children, as well as free schooling. It would pay its men and women teachers a better wage. It would have smaller classes. It would do many other things which would make Britain a fine place for children to be born in!

CARING FOR WIDOW MOTHERS.

What is a woman to do who has several young children and loses her husband? If she stays with her children at home, she cannot get enough money to keep them. If she goes out to work she neglects her children. The Labour Party has a way to meet this which it has learnt from the great country across the Atlantic—America. When an American widow is left with young children, she is not left penniless; the State comes to her help. It says to her, "the best work you can do is to look after your own children, and we will pay you a pension to do this." During the war our country paid mothers a pension to look after their children while the husband and father was at the front. Does not the widow need a "separation allowance" quite as much when the husband is dead. The Labour Party says this must be done.

OLD-AGE PENSIONS.

When men and women reach old age, what a shame it is if they have to go into the workhouse or become dependent on their relatives! It was to prevent this that the Labour Party many years ago demanded "old-age pensions." After fighting for this reform a long time, old people at last were given a beggarly 5s. a week. This has now been raised to 10s. a week. It is not nearly enough. And often it is cut down to less than this if the old man or woman has got a few shillings from some other source. The Labour Party demand that this sum shall be raised, and shall not be cut down at all.

THE EMPIRE.

The Labour Party believes that the peace of the world can only be founded on justice and on the right of nations—great and small—to decide themselves how they shall be governed. It would apply this principle not only in its dealings with foreign countries, but in all parts of the British Empire. The policy wisely adopted in South Africa in 1906 and tardily carried out in Ireland at the end of 1921 after many attempts at violent subjection, must be followed by conciliation in Egypt and India whereby these great dependencies may become willing to co-operate for the common weal.

WHERE *YOU* COME IN.

Which side are you on in all these things? Are you content to-day? Or do you want to see things better—better for yourself, better for your children, better for the country as a whole? If you want reform, come and join the Labour Party, and do your bit to help the election of a strong body of Labour men to the House of Commons.

Quantities of this leaflet can be obtained from the Labour Party, 33, Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1, at the rate of £1 1s. per 1,000, carriage paid.

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